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SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM
(Science and Art Department).

LOCAL METROPOLITAN MUSEUMS.

REPORT

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS held in the LECTURE THEATRE, SOUTH
KENSINGTON, on Saturday, 6th May 1865.

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THE LORD PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL IN THE CHAIR.

The proceedings commenced at Twelve o'clock.

The meeting was convened in pursuance of the following circular:

“ May 1865.

“ I am directed by the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education to inform you that their Lordships have had before them the several communications they have from time to time received respecting the establishment of Suburban Museums of Science and Art, and are considering how the Iron Building of the South Kensington Museum may be made useful for the purpose.

“ My Lords having been informed that you are interested in the proposed establishment of these Museums, trust that they may be favoured with your presence at a meeting, to be held in the Lecture Theatre of the South Kensington Museum, on Saturday, the 6th of May, at 12 o'clock.

" The Lord President will be happy to hear that
 " you are able to meet him on this occasion to discuss
 " the subject.

" I have the honour to be

" Your obedient servant,

" HENRY COLE."

The following noblemen and gentlemen were present:—

A. S. Ayrton, M.P.; J. J. Briscoe, M.P.; the Right Hon. H. A. Bruce, the Vice President of the Committee of Council on Education; the Right Hon. W. F. Cowper, M.P.; Lord Ebury, M.P.; Lord Henry Lennox, M.P.; Harvey Lewis, M.P.; John Locke, Q.C., M.P.; Francis S. Powell, M.P.; Alderman Salomons, M.P.; W. Tite, M.P.

Reverends Hugh Allen, D.D., Southwark; John Bowstead, St. Olaves, Southwark; Baldwin Brown; Hamlet Clark, Quebec Chapel, Marylebone; William Dorling; T. W. Fowle, Trinity, Hoxton; Newman Hall, LL.B.; Septimus Hansard, Rector, Bethnal Green; Dr. Hewlett, Tredegar Square, E.; James McC. Hussey, Christchurch, North Brixton; J. T. Jeffcock, St. Saviours, Hoxton; John Kennedy, Stepney; J. Lingham, Lambeth; George H. McGill, Christ Church, Watney Street; W. B. Mackenzie, St. James', Holloway; R. Marshall Martin, Bermondsey; T. J. Rowsell; Robert Spears, Minister of Stamford Street Chapel; A. B. Suter, Spitalfields; John Tagg, St. John's, Bethnal Green; Lewin Tugwell, St. Andrew, Lambeth; W. Tyler.

Messrs. Charles Alderton, Clerkenwell; Joseph Berdoe (Capt.); Dr. T. E. Bowkett; Antonio Brady, Admiralty, Somerset House; E. P. Loftus Brock, Secretary South London Museum Society; John Chisholm, Holloway; John Corderoy, Kennington; Geo. Cruikshank; Edmund Hay Currie, Hon. Secretary Metropolitan Adult Education Association; G. H. Davis, M.D.; F. J. Dove, Islington; J. B. Downing; Andrew Dunn; Fred. Dyer, "South London Journal;" Wm. H. Fell; Francis H. Fowler, M.I.B.A.; Dr. Giles, Hackney; George Godwin, F.R.S.; Ferdinand

Grut, Southwark; T. C. Heller; W. Hislop; A. J. Beresford Hope, F.S.A.; W. A. Hows, Kingsland; Robert Hudson, Clapham Common; W. T. Iliff, M.D.; E. D. Johnson, F.R.A.S., Clerkenwell; W. G. Kent; George King; G. J. Knight, sen., Cambridge Road; J. Baxter Langley, Lincoln's Inn; Captain Littlehales, R.N.; Benj. Lucraft; B. Marriott; Henry Maudslay, C.E., Lambeth; Dr. Millar, Bethnal House, Cambridge Road; W.H. Miller, Lambeth; Richard Moreland, C.E., Old Street; John Mumford; George M. Murphy, Lambeth; William Myers; C. P. Newcombe, Islington; W. L. Newcombe; George Prichard, Stamford Street; John Ratley, Hon. Secretary North London Industrial Exhibition; Alexander Rivington; E. Dresser Rogers, Southwark; R. W. Roger; Henry H. Sales; J. D'A. Samuda, Millwall; W. R. Selway; C. Shepherd; Samuel Sidney; Wm. Martin Smith; E. Southwell; G. C. Steet; William Stutfield; Joseph Surr, jun., Islington; Dr. Grainger Tandy, Spital Square; Stephen S. Tayler; George Thorneloe, Strand; John Thwaites, Chairman Metropolitan Board of Works; T. Turner; Hugh Wallace, Battersea Park; William West; C. J. Whitmore, King's Cross; F. Wilson, Stockwell; Thomas Winkworth, F.S.A., Canonbury.

Letters of apology for not being able to attend the meeting were received from:—

The BISHOP OF LONDON, who wrote:—

"I am much interested in the object for which it has been called, and shall be glad if it is found practicable to establish Museums of Art and Science in the various districts of the Metropolis."

The CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, who expressed himself as being "sincerely interested in the subject of Suburban Museums."

VISCOUNT ENFIELD, M.P.

MR. C. BUXTON, M.P.

LORD RADSTOCK.

HON. A. F. KINNAIRD, M.P.

SIR CHARLES EASTLAKE, P.R.A., &c.

The LORD PRESIDENT rose and said: My Lords and Gentlemen—I apprehend we are met together to-day to do a little business of a useful character, and not to make speeches, except as to the point of business which now more immediately concerns us. I believe you are all fully aware, from the circular you have received, of the object of the present meeting. We all live in a town of which we are proud: perhaps not proud of it as the most beautiful capital in the world; but it is the largest and richest, and after all is a very comfortable old town. But the misfortune is that there are some inconveniences about it. We have some magnificent collections of works of art in this Metropolis. I do not think there is a finer collection to be found than is to be met with in the British Museum. We have recently founded a National Gallery, and in some quarters it has been felt that the collection has not been housed as it ought to be. We also prepared for the collection which was established here a few years ago at South Kensington. We have got a building here of which the drawing on the board behind me is the ground plan, which I cannot much recommend as being remarkably beautiful; but simple and plain as it is it has been of great service to us here, and served to house the beginning of the collection which has so much grown in extent, not only by public grants but very much by the great munificence of individuals in gifts, legacies, and loans. No doubt the system of metropolitan railways now in process of being carried out will tend greatly to facilitate the visits of the working classes to this museum from the various districts of London; but at the same time it is felt to be highly desirable, looking to the enormous enjoyment this collection has afforded, more especially to the immediate vicinity, that these institutions should, if possible, be multiplied, so that within certain limits they may be more readily available to all classes of the community in different districts. For this purpose the Department of Science and Art applied to the Treasury, the time having happily

come when it was thought that we might take down these iron buildings and erect one of a more suitable character to the purposes to which it is to be devoted. We applied for permission, instead of selling the buildings for what they would fetch as old materials, that they should be disposed of in what we considered the more useful and beneficial way of distributing them in portions that might be available amongst different districts of the metropolis. Our first plan was to give the buildings in perpetuity, under certain conditions and restrictions. I may now be allowed to state—and I am sorry the idea did not occur to me before, but coming down to this meeting one or two suggestions occurred to me—I think the only disadvantage of the plan, as far as I can see, is that to a certain degree this building I admit has nothing of beauty in it; and I, for one, should be very sorry for all eternity to erect ugly buildings in different parts of the metropolis. But I reflected upon the use this building has been to us, and I do not myself see why this building—plain, simple, and ugly, if you like, as it is—should not, when divided into parts, acquire a new vitality and perform its proper functions with good effect. Now, I have very little doubt, when there are museums established in the north, the south, and the east of London, that the use these museums prove to be, and the appetites gained in eating of the fruits of these museums, will be very great. To give you a popular illustration of this idea, you know the principle of Sam Slick, by lending his clocks and requiring no payment, but coming back a year after, he found each household so attached to the clock, that nothing would induce them to part with it, and they bought it. I think this building might be divided into several portions. It is only a crude idea of my own, whether, instead of giving it as a whole in perpetuity, and making this a permanent building, this department could not lend the building, divided into five or six portions—either putting them up at our own expense, exacting a certain rent, or sharing with the localities the expense of putting them up.

But after a certain time, having this building, I have no doubt, and I am confirmed in this opinion by the letters we have received from many who take an interest in this affair, I have no doubt that when the building is once up, it will not be long before a valuable collection is brought together within it; and when you commence that collection, the public will be like the boy with the piece of bread-and-butter who, when he found a difficulty in apportioning the bread to the butter and the butter to the bread, went on eating at both sides till he got quite his fill; and I think it very probable that if you get portions of the building large enough to hold a good collection, when it overgrows itself, and the pleasure which it affords to the locality is experienced, there will be a desire created to erect a building in better taste, more handsome, and more worthy of being a thing in perpetuity. This, I repeat, is a crude idea which occurred to my mind as I was driving down here this morning, but I should be glad to hear the opinions of some of those present, whether they think there is something in it which might be useful as tending to promote these local collections, tending also eventually to get rid of buildings of an ugly character. The real object before us to-day is to hear statements with regard to the claims of different localities for portions of this building. We do not wish so much to advance our own opinions to-day as to hear statements from others, and I have to make the request that such statements and claims may hereafter be reduced to writing, in order that they may be carefully considered. It is clear that what we want is that each district should be properly represented in this matter. As to the claims, they must, in a great degree, depend upon the sites that are available for the purpose, and upon the voluntary efforts made for carrying out the plan, as also upon other considerations which I have no doubt will be brought before us by those who have any plans to propose. I have now to request that those who have any definite plans to propose, will do so.

Mr. W. TITE, M.P.: Permit me, my lord, to ask

a question—not so much of your lordship as of Mr. Cole. It is this. This building, as we know, is made of iron, and it is very desirable, I think, that we should know something about its condition. We architects know that the durability of iron, even when well coated with paint, is very moderate indeed. I want to know whether there has been any architectural or other professional examination of the building in reference to its state of durability, and whether it has suffered from rust or is full of holes—as many iron roofs that I am acquainted with become affected in that way. Although corrugated iron is superior to flat plates, yet I have known such roofs to become full of holes.

Mr. HENRY COLE, C.B.: I can assure Mr. Tite that the building is thoroughly waterproof throughout. It has had a good deal of attention paid to it, and the outside has been painted every two years. We have no reason to think that the iron has been much worn during the last ten years—that I know is the opinion of Captain Fowke. With respect to the other parts of the building, the columns and framings, they are just as good as when they were first put up. It is, I believe, the opinion of Captain Fowke that in the event of the old columns, frames, and flooring being used, it would be desirable to put on a different roof rather than to repeat the corrugated iron roofing. We found soon after we became tenants of the building that the temperature was very variable, but we have cured that completely, and we have a mean temperature which is I believe a right one; such temperature would be greatly aided by having a plastered ceiling beneath it.

A GENTLEMAN inquired whether the iron work was fastened by rivets or screw bolts; the tearing away of the rivets he said would cause considerable damage to the edges of the plates of iron.

The LORD PRESIDENT: It is very desirable, no doubt, that these practical matters should be brought forward; but I think perhaps in our discussion to-day we had better adhere to the general purposes for which we are met than to go into these details now.

Rev. HUGH ALLEN: My lord, a few years ago I was called upon to form part of a deputation in reference to the establishment of a museum in South London, and we were on that occasion very graciously received by the noble premier. We were accompanied by my friend, the member for Southwark, Mr. Locke, and by Mr. Williams, the member for Lambeth, lately deceased. There was then a very satisfactory statement made expressing the conviction of leading persons of the south of London that a fair local effort could be calculated upon if there was a fair encouragement afforded on the part of the Government, and I have no doubt that this proposition will be received by the inhabitants of South London with the greatest satisfaction and thankfulness. But having myself paid great attention to the subject, I am fully assured, knowing South London as I do pretty well, that you must give the building as a gift and not as a mere loan, because there will necessarily be a great deal of expense connected with the re-erection of any building you may grant; and we should like to make it a little handsome, and if we want to make it handsome we shall have to provide the money ourselves to do it with. As this scheme has been launched before the Treasury I would ask the Council to consider well their first thoughts before they go to second thoughts on this matter. Then there is another question, which, however, I would not bring forward unless your lordship thinks I am quite at liberty to do so. I don't know whether it ought to be put forward now, and yet I do not know that your lordship would be disinclined to have it mentioned. It is in reference to the debate which took place in the House of Commons last night; and I for one should be glad to know whether there is any truth in the intimation surmised in the House, that the National Collections in the British Museum are to be taken from thence and to be brought down here; for though I should be delighted to have local museums, yet as a great people we do delight in our great central museum being kept up in its integrity.

Alderman SALOMONS: My lord, I rise to order. I think we ought not now to go into particular questions, but to clear the ground to know what we are doing. With a view to understand what we are doing, I did not quite gather what the Treasury are inclined to allow your lordship to carry into effect. Is it merely the giving of these buildings to the various localities that wish for them, or do you convey them to the spot and allow them to put them up? Also, whether you will divide the buildings yourselves and give them to the parties, or whether they should move them at their own expense?

The LORD PRESIDENT: It is very reasonable that these inquiries should be made. With regard to the number of the divisions of the building I think there is some doubt.

Lord Ebury: Perhaps your lordship, while replying to these questions, will also inform us whether the building, as a whole, is to be assigned to one locality, or what it is susceptible of being divided into, in order that we may have some notion of what we are doing.

The LORD PRESIDENT: I was saying, with regard to the divisions of the building, there is some doubt, and that is a matter which we shall have to consider after the applications are received. I apprehend it might be divided into three, four, or five portions, and I understand the wish of the Treasury to be that instead of selling the building as old materials at a certain sum, but not for so much as they are intrinsically worth, but only at a nominal cost, the building should be divided into three, four, or even five portions for the purposes of each district.

Mr. BERESFORD HOPE: Is it open for any district to apply for any portion of the building, or is it to be restricted to the metropolitan districts alone?

The LORD PRESIDENT: Our present purposes are as to London alone.

Mr. J. LOCKE, M.P.: If the building is divided, it is obvious, according to the plan before us, it could only have three sides at most to it, and part of it

would have only two walls to it if it were taken to pieces and put up in a different way from what appears in that plan. It would, in fact, be only having some old materials if divided into five different parts, and whoever has them will have to supply a large quantity of new materials to complete the thing. The question therefore arises in my mind whether it would not be cheaper to erect a new building altogether than to have certain parts of this old one. If it were a building that might be taken down, and if certain compartments of it would form a perfect building of itself, if I say it were so the offer would be more valuable. Therefore if there is any person present who could explain the precise nature of the building, and how it could be divided for the purpose of forming from three to five separate buildings, it would, I think, be an advantage to those who may have come here prepared to make a proposition for a portion of it.

The LORD PRESIDENT: I have requested that Captain Fowke should be sent for, as he is better able to explain the exact mode in which the building may be divided; but, as Mr. Locke suggests, these are buildings of equal proportions, and may be divided into sections according to the number that may be proposed.

Mr. GEORGE GODWIN: With regard to the building itself, it is quite evident, my lord, that there are so many iron columns and so many girders. With a certain number of columns and girders you may form a building. One would like to know what applications have really been made to the department for the use of this building? We want to know whether South London, or North London, or East London, are desirous to have a building of this kind, and whether they have made any special application on the subject? We want to know what parts of London are ready to accept what the Government may be willing to grant them?

Mr. AYRTON, M.P.: I may be pardoned, my lord, saying that it is not so easy for us non-professional men to understand the character of this building. I

have been looking at it, and I confess I do not. As I understand it, so far, it must be either one building, two buildings, or four buildings : but it has not entered into my mind to comprehend how it can be divided into three buildings ; and, my lord, what we really want to know is, what would be the conditions imposed upon those who make an offer to convert a portion of the whole building into a building elsewhere, about what it would cost, and how it could be done in the best way. Three parts certainly do not seem to be a natural division of a parallelogram ; still less do we know the expense of taking down part or the whole and putting it up elsewhere, and adapting it to the purposes for which it is designed. If we had some general information of this kind each part of the community would know what it could undertake to do. I think we should save time by waiting to hear such information on these matters as Captain Fowke will no doubt be able to afford us.

Rev. NEWMAN HALL (Blackfriars) : There are, my lord, many questions of detail which I believe could be best entered into by a small body of practical men, and which can hardly be gone into in a general assembly like the present one. I beg, my lord, to put forward a claim on behalf of South London. There has been a memorial on this subject presented to Lord Palmerston containing upwards of 10,000 signatures of working men of South London. We are all agreed on the importance of having a museum. It is impossible to contend against the demoralising and debasing tendencies of the public-houses unless there is something of this character to attract and amuse the great masses of the working population in their hours of leisure. It is of the utmost importance that these museums should be open at night when alone the poor man can attend. The British Museum is utterly useless to the masses of the people because it is open only in the daytime. We want museums for the amusement and attraction of the workpeople in the evenings. We are now taxed for keeping people in prisons for their crimes against society ;

how much better would it be to spend the same amount of money in providing them innocent and intellectual amusement which would keep them out of danger. When an opportunity of this sort is given working people show an earnest disposition to avail themselves of it. The museums must be localised. It is too much to require a man to go several miles to reach a museum of this kind, and on his way there he has to pass hundreds of public-houses and places of demoralising amusement, and it is difficult for him to go a distance after his day's work. For my own part I know no district of London which more requires a museum than the south. More and more it occurs that people who have the means and opportunity to do so remove to the suburbs, and therefore the locality is less desirable for those who remain residents there, and the great masses of the people require something to amuse them. I am persuaded the Government could not do a better or a cheaper thing. They would save it in the reduction of taxation for the punishment and suppression of crime, and would confer a boon which is much called for by aiding in the establishment in each district of the metropolis of places of innocent and intellectual recreation for the working classes.

The LORD PRESIDENT: Having listened with great pleasure to the very earnest appeal of the reverend gentleman on behalf of South London, I should now be happy to hear from some other representative of that district what it is thought South London will do for themselves in this matter.

Mr. HENRY MAUDSLAY: I should very much like to know how the roof runs upon that parallelogram. Is it in its length or in its breadth?

Mr. TITE: There are three long rooms—boilers as they are called.

Mr. MAUDSLAY: Then I am sure we could not do better than ask for the whole of the building for South London, and I am sure, with the assistance of Government, we should very soon fill it. Now, my lord, I can state that very recently the workpeople

of South London filled a building of half the area of this with works of their own industry ; and great as the success of that exhibition was, it would have been greater if the large employers of labour in that district had given the same assistance as had been afforded to similar exhibitions in other parts of London. Looking at the area that was occupied at the recent working men's exhibition, I am sure it is not too much to ask for the whole building. If I might be permitted to second the proposition of the reverend gentleman who preceded me, I would willingly do so. I think subscriptions could be obtained in South London to a large amount to assist in the promotion of a local museum. As, however, I have no doubt claims will be urged on behalf of other localities, I have no wish to be too grasping on behalf of my own ; but, at the same time, I should like it to be understood that we have plenty of opportunities of appropriately supplying an exhibition of the kind proposed.

The LORD PRESIDENT : It will help us in the further consideration of the subject to hear the propositions that are made by each district. I gather from the Rev. Newman Hall and Mr. Maudslay, that South London would be willing to pay the cost of re-erecting the building and the providing of a site. As far as I have understood there has been some difficulty in the south with regard to an appropriate site, but there is no difficulty in getting subscriptions for the erection of the building. Do I rightly understand Mr. Maudslay on that point ?

Mr. MAUDSLAY : I think I may say, my lord, we could readily raise the necessary subscription for the erection of such portion of the building as may be assigned to us, and indeed to erect the whole of such a building as is described in the plan on the wall.

The LORD PRESIDENT : Can you guarantee that ?

Mr. MAUDSLAY : I can guarantee my own personal share in the matter ; and I believe I might guarantee a sum necessary for the erection of a building and to make it more permanent externally, as well as satisfactory internally in an educational point of view.

The LORD PRESIDENT : As to the site, may I ask whether the difficulty is considered insuperable?

Mr. MAUDSLAY : I think, my lord, by no means so; I think that may be overcome.

Rev. NEWMAN HALL : I was about to add what I consider we can do. Certainly to maintain the building, certainly very soon to fill it with objects of interest. With regard to the funds, it is to the large employers of labour we must look for them.

Mr. ANTONIO BRADY : I would beg, my lord, to put in a claim for the east of London. From having taken a somewhat active part in this matter, I know that we have a promise and a fair prospect of a magnificent site in the centre of many hundreds of thousands of artizan population. It is on behalf of these sons of toil that I beseech your lordship to give us all the help you can. The leading inhabitants of the district have come forward in a very promising manner. It would be unfair in me to imitate the bold course which has been taken by those who have preceded me, and to ask for the whole of the building for the east of London; but I believe I may vie with those gentlemen in the assurance that we can collect enough objects of art and manufactures to fill double such a building; and I believe there is spirit enough in that neighbourhood, that they will be able not only to keep that up, but provide a much better permanent building for themselves in a short time. On behalf, therefore, of this numerous body of the bones and sinews of our national industry I beg to make an earnest appeal in this matter.

The LORD PRESIDENT : Do I understand Mr. Brady to state that there is an admirable site in East London? and that there is a readiness on the part of the inhabitants to re-erect the whole or a portion of the building; also that there is a great probability of a more permanent building being erected ultimately?

Mr. BRADY : Quite so, my lord—the site is not far from Victoria Park, and is a very excellent one.

Mr. HARVEY LEWIS, M.P. : I beg, my lord, to put in a claim on behalf of the north-west district of London.

I would earnestly support the appeal made by my friend Mr. Newman Hall that these museums should be localised, so that they might be easy of access to the working classes after their day of toil. I have myself presented petitions to the House of Commons, signed by many thousands of that class, praying for loans of works of art from the national repositories to be deposited in rooms selected for the purpose. I am not at present prepared to submit any definite proposition on behalf of the district I represent ; but I may state that the First Commissioner of Works lately opened an exhibition of the industry of that district which was highly creditable to those men. I have no doubt, when this matter is ventilated, that quarter of the metropolis will in a definite form urge its claims for a portion of this building.

Dr. HEWLETT : I may be allowed, my lord, to put in a claim on behalf of the far east of London. The feeling amongst the working classes of that district on this subject, I can assure your lordship, is very strong indeed; great exertions have been made amongst the working classes themselves to establish a local public library and museum. To show the interest that is felt in this thing, I may state that there is a public-house on the roadside where they have a museum containing a very large collection of natural curiosities, and the place is very much frequented by the working classes, to whom the museum has proved a great attraction. The place itself is objectionable for such a purpose ; but it shows the great desire that there is for such museums, and augurs well for the support of one of a higher character and more favourably situated. There is suspended from the public-house to which I have referred, a large flag with the inscription "Museum of Natural Curiosities;" I may add that one advantage of the locality is that, being a seafaring population to a great extent, the most favourable opportunities are afforded for collecting objects of interest applicable to such a museum as this, and there would be no fear of an abundant supply of such objects. The hon. member for the Tower

Hamlets is aware that for years past great exertions have been made in this district in this direction; and we hope through this occasion to receive such assistance as will be an encouragement to us still further to prosecute this good and desirable object.

Mr. E. DRESSER ROGERS (Southwark): I apprehend your lordship's object in calling this meeting together is to hear an expression of opinion from the several quarters of London as to the desire to have places for the exhibition of works of art and other works which the working man ought to see, rather than to hear from us any special pleading with regard to the division of the building. But when it is found that the desire for such institutions is so very general all over the metropolis, I apprehend you will find some means amongst yourselves of meeting that desire, and with the co-operation of those who are present here to-day I have hopes that before long the working classes in the remote districts of London will have the opportunity of witnessing collections similar to that which is gathered under this roof. Under the present system the working classes are to a great extent deprived of a pleasure which ought not to be withheld from them. I hope this meeting will be a practical one, and I trust that practical good in this direction will result from your lordship's invitation to this meeting. On the part of the south of London I can confirm what has already been so well stated as to the strong desire of that district to have an institution of this kind, to which I believe a very liberal local support and encouragement would be afforded.

Mr. BERESFORD HOPE, M.P.: The great difficulty I apprehend will be the satisfactory division and apportionment of this building for which so many claims have been put forward. We have a claim for museums from the east, the north, the north-east, and the south of London. But admitting all these claims to be fair and reasonable, how will the object be effected? If a portion of this building is granted, for instance, to South London, it will be as unavailable for portions of the south of London, such as Deptford and Batter-

sea, as the present museum here. If by any process of carving we could place portions of this building in Medea's cauldron and bring them out perfect structures, multiplied to the extent required, we might have some hope of satisfying the demands made upon it. Certainly there ought not to be less than five local museums; if you do not have that number at least some districts will consider themselves slighted. I would suggest that this meeting, called as it has been at short notice, and not knowing what was to be done, is incompetent to come to a conclusion. The general feeling being strongly in favour of the establishment of these museums, I apprehend the next step will be, as was the case with the numerous schemes for railways—to lay down a general plan first, and then for the various localities to stir in the matter with the view of establishing five museums; for I do not see that less than five could satisfy the people of London.

Rev. T. J. ROWSELL: I do not know whether it is a proper question to put; but several gentlemen have spoken of sites being available for these museums. May I ask them to be good enough to mention those sites; because a great deal depends upon the sites, as to how far the working classes could avail themselves of the opportunities offered. I confess I don't know where the site would be for South London, but I presume the gentlemen of that district know about that. I represent the east, and I know no quarter of London would be more ready than they to avail themselves of this opportunity for acquiring a local museum; but we are wholly in ignorance as to how far this building is capable of adaptation for the purposes in view, and we shall go away, as at present informed, with an imperfect idea whether the adaptation will not be a matter of greater expense than beginning *de novo*.

The LORD PRESIDENT: It may save time if I state at once that this meeting is to be regarded merely as a preliminary meeting, and I may say, as far as we have gone, a very satisfactory meeting. In the first

place I think it is extremely satisfactory that so many should have come from all parts of London and expressed the strongest possible opinion as to the desirability of district museums being established. Further than that, we have had gentlemen from different districts stating the claims they consider those districts have; some have even gone so far as to speak of sites ready for the purpose; but I think the whole matter before us must be considered as of a preliminary character. I think it would be wrong to separate without the Department stating that six months should be given in which each district might consider the matter and bring its plans definitely before the Department. We certainly had intended that. It was our desire that this general discussion should take place and this general expression of opinion be given; and after that I hope gentlemen will be good enough to send in writing a detailed statement of what they are ready to do, and what they would ask for in the competitive claim for this building, whatever its value may be. I find that Captain Fowke has gone away to execute some commission, but I think it is sufficient for our present purpose to take it as an accepted fact that such a professional examination of the building has been made as to admit of its being divided into certain portions; and before we go into a desultory conversation it should be understood that this assembly is not called upon to come to any decision to-day, but that it is most useful to have the subject ventilated in the way that it has been.

Mr. W. A. Hows (North-east): I should be glad, my lord, if we could have some little information given us of the average durability of iron buildings of this kind. We are quite certain of one thing—that it will be a difficult matter to divide this building into five portions; and I fear the probability is it will cost more money to adapt the portions of the building that may be granted than it would to erect a new building altogether. I am happy to see Mr. Tite here, who can give us a competent opinion upon the

architectural part of the question, and also Mr. Maudslay, who can give us a practical opinion as to the merits of this iron structure and its probable durability. We are told by the poet that

“A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,”

but I apprehend that will not be applicable to this building. I want to hear something as to its durability. I am not competent to give an opinion myself.

THE LORD PRESIDENT: I would venture to suggest that what is now stated is very sensible; but I think it had better be considered that we are acting upon competent advice in regarding this building as one which is capable of being divided into portions, suitable for the purposes to which it is proposed to appropriate them. At the same time I think the districts would act rashly if they took the offer at once, and in making their propositions hereafter they would no doubt appoint a competent person to see how far the building was available for their special requirements; and I can promise them that every facility for so doing will be placed at their command by the officers of the Department; but I feel convinced we shall lose ourselves if we go into the details now.

LORD EBURY: I rise to make a suggestion which may save some time. Your lordship has stated this to be only a preliminary meeting. I presume this will not be the only meeting that will take place, and that we shall meet again at a future time. It is impossible to go into a discussion now as to the probable duration of iron in this place; we are not assembled for a scientific inquiry of that nature. But it is of importance that we should know what the building is of which we are now talking about. I don't know whether these plans would assist us. I have no doubt many like myself are ill-qualified to say much about them. But if your lordship falls in with the suggestion I think it would aid us very much if there were some lithographed plans prepared with descriptions showing into how many parts and in what manner this building might be divided. With these facts and explanations before us we could better discuss

the subject on a future occasion ; and we should be spared the waste of time, which I consider it to be, of discussing matters of which we are ignorant. If this were done we should come to the next meeting better prepared.

Mr. TITE : I think I can put this matter straight. This plan is quite intelligible to me. What is suggested is that this mass of buildings should be divided into three portions, which would be each about 90 feet long and about 126 feet wide. The two ends would form one portion and the centre the other. In that building there is much useful and valuable material. I believe its original cost was 12,000*l.*, but it would not be worth much as old materials. Gentlemen may take it for granted that the building is capable of being divided into three parts of about the dimensions I have stated. As regards the value of the building for these purposes each district will judge for itself, as also whether it is suitable for its requirements. A very large question has been introduced. I happened to have the honour to be upon a committee on the subject of the British Museum ; and although that was the point to which the inquiry was directed, it was sufficiently manifest from the evidence taken that the establishment of district museums in London was considered highly desirable. I am delighted to find gentlemen of position and influence in the various districts supporting those views, because I think these institutions will be a means of taking people away from the public-houses, and giving them many of the advantages which are enjoyed in this great museum and in the British Museum. I am glad to see on all hands an earnest desire to carry out your lordship's views. To a certain extent the materials of this building are valuable. As to its inelegancies I believe the external part is iron, which has been kept in good condition by painting. I am glad to find your lordship's suggestions so well received. An interim of some months I think is desirable during which the several districts will be able to mature their plans and ascertain what their requirements may be. As regards

all the money being found by Government I feel very sure that will not happen; but I have no doubt assistance will be given to those who show a disposition to help themselves. With regard to the request that has been made that the sites should be stated, I have a decided objection to that, because the moment a situation was spoken of, an enormously enhanced price would be sure to be put upon the land; therefore the less said about the sites at present the better it would be.

MR. FRANCIS S. POWELL, M.P.: We must take it that a responsible examination of the building has been made; but if the Government is to meet the action of the various parts of London of a voluntary character, it will be convenient that the various districts should know what is the expense to which they will be exposed by the purchase or otherwise, removal, and re-erection of portions of this building. It is not improbable, I think, that, as has been suggested, the expense of removal and transformation of the structure will be more than the result will warrant. I do not profess any architectural knowledge of the subject, but it occurs to me whether it is worth while to hire a temporary building, the expenses attending which may be so large that it might be wiser policy to grapple with the larger question of erecting a permanent structure at once. In an instance with which I am acquainted this has been done; and I have this idea, that we should be informed pretty accurately what is likely to be the expense incident to pulling down and re-erecting in a homely manner one-third of this building. I think we ought to keep in the most distinct manner before our eyes the idea that each of these museums is to be a new museum—that there is not to be a disintegration of this museum; because if that idea once gets abroad I am persuaded it will be fatal to the scheme. I know no reason why, if South Kensington is to be broken up, it should be done for London alone: but Dublin, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham, and other great towns, would put in

a claim for their share of the benefits. Therefore it will be as well it should be distinctly understood that South Kensington is to be kept in its integrity; otherwise claims will be made by the provinces for a share of the distribution.

Right Hon. H. A. BRUCE: The hon. gentleman has asked a question which it is obviously impossible to answer now, but which it will be easy to answer at a future time; that is, as to the probable cost of the removal of the portions of the structure which are worth removing to the different parts of the metropolis. Representing as I do a large iron producing district, I may say a great portion of this structure may be looked upon as permanent; the pillars, girders, window-frames, and all those parts which are not so much exposed to the action of the air, may be looked upon as being of a lasting character. With respect to the roof it may be different, but that is accompanied by the consolatory reflection that you are not bound to adhere to the exact form of the present building. Mr. Tite has understated the dimensions. Instead of 90 feet length it is 226 feet. (Mr. Tite—And the third of that for each portion.) You must take the whole breadth and one-third of the length; whereas Mr. Tite gave you one-third of the length and one-third of the breadth. There will be no difficulty in disposing of these materials in a more elegant form than they exhibit now, and I have no doubt there is enough taste in London to apply these materials in an ornamental manner.

Mr. REMMINGTON: I rise, my lord, in the interest of the north of London. What we want in our district is the help of the Government to establish a museum, in the first place, on the same principle as South Kensington. We do not want there birds, beasts, and fishes, but a museum by which the working classes would be instructed; and if that were done a school of art would very soon follow. Working men, when their business is over for the day, do not feel inclined to take a journey of five or six miles to visit this museum; and we consider that constitutes a great claim

on behalf of the north and north-east of London for the help of the Government in establishing a local museum. Looking at the success of the recent industrial exhibitions in the metropolis, we consider if museums were opened they would be highly successful, and we shall only be too happy to receive any assistance we can obtain.

Mr. MURPHY (Lambeth) : I should like to say that I think a large number of those present to-day will be opposed to the postponing of this matter for so long a period as six months. It is a long time in the history of one's life, and I think even a postponement for three months is too long. On the part of South London, I may say we should be ready in a week. During the present session of Parliament 50 or 60 petitions have been presented from South London on the subject of local museums, and for the opening of the national collections at night, and we have presented a memorial to the prime minister, containing 10,000 signatures, on this very subject. Our desire is to know clearly and definitely what position the Government will take, and how far they will be willing to aid us in this particular matter. I quite endorse what has been said by previous speakers, that there are gentlemen of sufficient public spirit to start such a museum, and that there are thousands upon thousands of the working classes waiting to avail themselves of its advantages. Already two working men's exhibitions have been held ; one during the late months of inclement weather, but that did not prevent it being so filled with visitors of an evening that the doors had to be closed, though payment was charged for admission. I am quite sure Government aid in this direction would bring about a great and good work for the entire metropolis. It was stated in the House of Commons last night that we cannot expect a grant of public money for this purpose ; but I may remind the meeting that there has been a grant of 15,000*l.* from the Crown lands for a specific purpose, and as there is so large an extent of Crown lands in every quarter of London, they might be disposed to meet

us in some way in reference to this most desirable object. I am satisfied that, not merely as a matter of amusement, but also for educational purposes, the Government would gain immeasurable benefit in the establishment of museums of this kind. On behalf of South London, I would say, as soon as any definite project is proposed we shall be prepared in a very short time to state what we are prepared to do in the matter.

Mr. BENJAMIN LUCRAFT (Hoxton): I would say a word, my lord, not so much in respect of the building as on behalf of the class to which I belong. I am to-day in a representative character. At a meeting of working men held in Hoxton last evening, I was requested to attend here to-day to express their views on this subject. I do not think it would do to propose a plan accompanied by any great expense to the working classes in any quarter of London ; what I am certain they would do is, they would make it successful if it is initiated by those who have the power and the means to do it. I agree with gentlemen who have spoken that we have too many gin palaces in the way of the working classes. In coming to South Kensington they have to pass not five or six of those places, but five or six hundred of them ; and great inducements they are to the working man—not that I mean to stigmatize the working class as ineptites ; as a rule they are sober men, and all they require is that the opportunities may be afforded of improving themselves. They do not ask this in the way of charity. They want something higher to climb at, and they look to those in power to put it in their way. It would only be judicious on the part of the wealthier classes if they did something in this direction—not, I repeat, in the way of charity—for charity would not be required in this matter. The artizan wants placed within his reach that by which he can improve himself. I have come here myself sometimes for that purpose ; I have worked very hard during the week in order to be able to spare a part of the Saturday to come to Kensington, and rumbling down here in an omnibus from

Hoxton takes an hour and a half, which I look on as so much time lost from my enjoyment here. I have a desire to improve myself and to become a better workman ; and that which I say of myself may be said of the great masses of the working classes. We have a desire to improve ourselves in that which we get our living by. My own occupation is that of a cabinet maker, and if I want to do something better than I have yet done, there is nothing I can go to and see what was done, capitally, by some one 100 or 200 years ago. Suppose I have a gothic chair ordered, I don't want exactly to copy what some one else has done in gothic times, but I want to see what their ideas were. On coming down here on a Saturday afternoon, the first thing I do is to sit down, because I am tired, but I never go back with the same pleasure as I come. It suggests itself to my mind that an injustice is done to myself and to my own class, that nothing has been done to bring these means of instruction and self-improvement within a more reasonable distance and more readily accessible ; and it seems to me as if I was not wanted here. I am glad this large public institution has been filled as it is. We in the distant parts of London do not envy you this establishment, but our desire is to have something of the kind for ourselves. I hope, my lord, you will turn your attention to this fact that it is for the benefit of the whole nation. We have to compete with the whole world in our arts and manufactures ; politicians have done that for us, they have opened our markets up to the working men of the whole world. The working men on the continent have larger opportunities of improving in taste and manufacture than is the case at home, therefore we are at a disadvantage. I am as good a free-trader as ever existed, but let us have the means of being able to compete with those who have now better opportunities of improving their taste than we have. I speak for my class when I say we shall be glad if you will do something for us in this way, not in the way of charity but in the way of justice.

Mr. AYRTON, M.P.: We must bear in mind that the noble lord in the chair has important public duties to perform, and I think we ought not to detain his lordship further from them. He has invited this meeting to receive his explanation of the manner in which this building may be appropriated, and we have sufficient information, I think, to enable us to form a general idea of what can be done in this matter, and it remains to be seen what we in our respective districts shall be able to do towards meeting the offer that has been made to us. The noble lord has explained that he does not expect any definite propositions from us to-day, but his lordship will go away with the information he has received, and it only remains for each district to come forward with a plan in a definite shape within six months, so that it may be duly considered and decided upon. Some think that period is too long, but when you recollect that the Department will not be ready to receive propositions unless accompanied by evidence that the building is to be dedicated to the purposes for which it is given, I do not think the period proposed is too lengthened a one. It appears, therefore, to me that we have so far accomplished the purpose for which we have met, and that we are not justified in detaining the noble earl in the chair while we carry on a general debate on this subject. I am sure, therefore, you will all concur in expressing your cordial thanks to his lordship for having given us the information which he wanted us together to hear from him, and for the courteous manner in which he has presided over this meeting.

Mr. J. J. BRISCOE, M.P.: I would beg to be allowed the privilege to second the vote of thanks that has just been proposed. I may add, that I have been requested to ask whether on the part of the Council it is their intention to present this building to the different districts of London as a free gift, because the question of the expense of the removal has been mentioned, and some doubt may be entertained whether it is worth the expense of removing. I be-

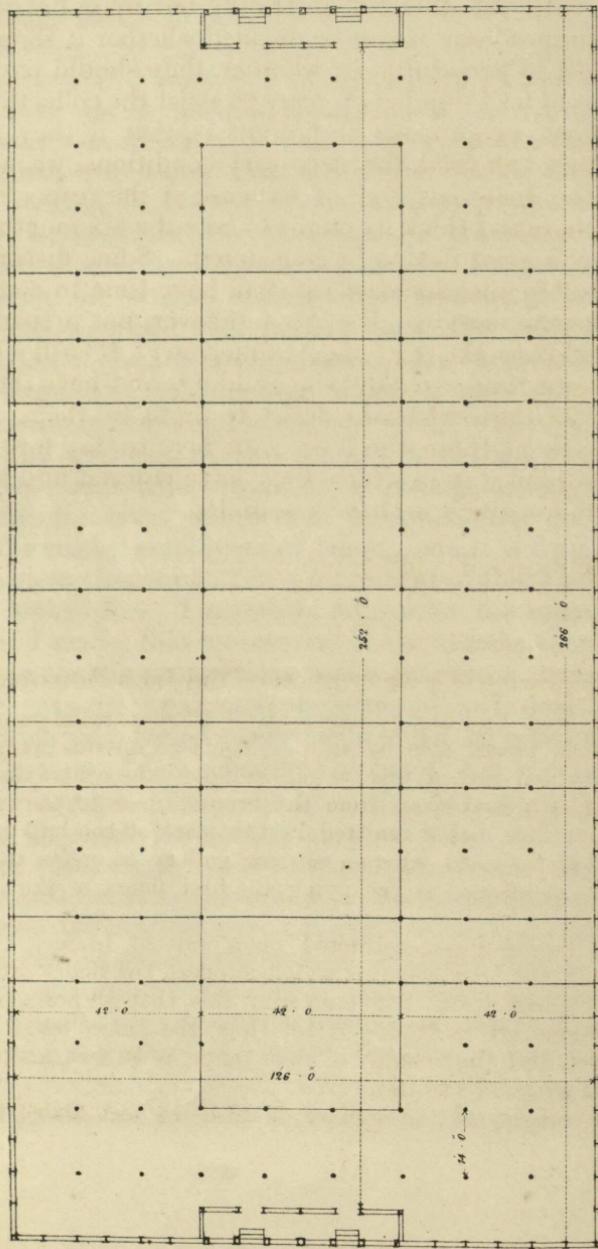
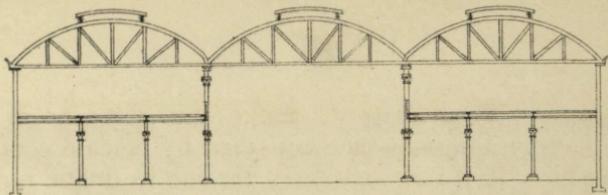
lieve the whole cost originally was not above 10,000*l.* (Mr. Henry Cole: 12,000*l.*) I hope the offer of the noble lord will not be attended with any very stringent conditions which may tend to lessen the value of the gift. It has given me a degree of satisfaction more than I can express to have attended this meeting, because it has afforded an opportunity for a unanimous expression of opinion that the object of providing district museums in different parts of this great metropolis, is one which it is most desirable should be carried out; and the noble lord may leave this meeting with the conviction that whether further proceedings are postponed for three months or six months, no very long period can elapse before this object is carried out for the benefit of a class of the community who deserve every encouragement that can be given to them in such a matter. I beg to second the resolution of thanks to the noble lord which my honourable friend Mr. Ayrton has proposed, for his kindness in calling this meeting, and for the ability and courtesy he has displayed on this as on all occasions when we have the happiness to meet his lordship.

The resolution having been carried by acclamation—

The LORD PRESIDENT rose and said: In few words I beg to thank you for the resolution you have just carried in so kind a manner. In fact I think that thanks are the other way; I am sincerely obliged to those who have come here to-day, all agreeing to promote an object which I believe to be one of very great importance. With regard to South Kensington Museum, so far from feeling any jealousy, we wish to see these district museums spring up wherever they are likely to be useful and agreeable. So far from their being likely to lessen the number of visitors to this museum, I believe they would induce more frequent visits to this institution, particularly when the completion of the metropolitan system of railways renders it more easy of access than it is from many parts of London

at the present time. Our feeling in that respect is not one of alarm on the score of the want of attendance here. What we have done to-day, though not of a definite character, is a good work. This assembly, I feel, has a right to speak for London; and you have decided that it is desirable to have district museums. We have heard the claims of the several districts. As men of business you have proposed as much as it is at all possible to do; but looking at the manner in which the claims have been advocated it gives me hopes that something like rivalry will be excited in respect of the voluntary efforts that will be made in this direction. I must say I was much struck by the remarks of Mr. Lucraft, representing as he does a class whose feelings, I believe, he has described with perfect truth, the really sound portion of the labouring classes. He expressed those feelings, too, in language which it gave me great pleasure to hear; and when he stated the requirements of the workmen of this country he did not overstate them. But with regard to voluntary action, where there are great numbers of workmen there are great and wealthy employers of labour, and it is from such quarters that support in a movement of this kind may be looked for. I certainly adhere to the suggestion that I made, that an interval of six months should be given for the propositions to be put into a shape that they can be practically entertained and dealt with. During that period every facility will be given to the promoters of this scheme to obtain all the information they require. From the hints that have been thrown out by some gentlemen, they evidently do not pay very strict regard to the old proverb of not "looking 'a gift horse in the mouth." We do not propose this as any extravagant gift on the part of the Government. We should get a certain sum for the old materials, and you must remember if you wished to purchase such materials you would have to pay nearly as much as we did in the first instance for them. Therefore it will amount to 12,000*l.*, with deduction for wear and tear, given to the metropolis for the purposes of these

PLAN OF THE IRON BUILDING OF THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM.



museums. We propose to make this gift—or at a price merely nominal—accompanied by certain conditions which it is not necessary for me to define now. I must say I am not quite prepared to give up my own little plan, which might be the subject of arrangement with the different districts; but upon hearing their propositions it can be decided whether it should be a gift in perpetuity, or whether they should pay a small rent for a number of years to assist the collection. But what we propose at present is, that if they on their part can fulfil the necessary conditions, we will give the materials free of expense at the respective sites chosen. I think we ought to take the six months; there is a great deal to be considered. Some districts require organization, and we shall have time to consider their proposals. We are, moreover, not prepared to hand over the materials to-morrow. It will also take some time to remove the buildings and have them ready for those who may desire to profit by them. I beg to thank those who have come here to-day for the very cordial way in which they have entered into the objects for which we have assembled.

The proceedings then terminated.

The following is a description of the IRON BUILDING:

The Iron Building is made up of three parallel ranges or blocks placed side by side. The two outside ranges are provided with a first or gallery floor; the centre range is kept as a clear space from the ground floor to the roof, the first floor being omitted in this part of the building, except at the ends, where a narrow gallery connects those already mentioned as occupying the first floors of the side ranges.

The building is constructed on a unit of 14 feet, that is to say, the iron columns which support the floors are at that distance apart; it follows from this, that all horizontal dimensions are multiples of 14, thus, the entire length is 266 feet, and the breadth of each range is 42 feet, making a total width of 126 feet.

The height of the gallery is also 14 feet above the

ground floor, and the eaves of the roof are at a further height of 14 feet.

A separate roof spans each of the ranges, the intermediate or valley girders, with their supporting columns, being common to each two contiguous roofs.

The building is a mixed construction of cast and wrought iron, and wood.

Cast-iron columns 14 feet apart are connected longitudinally by wrought-iron girders; these support lighter wrought-iron binders running transversely at half-bay, or 7 feet intervals, which in turn carry the timber joisting. The joisting of the ground floor, also of timber, raised 18 inches from the ground level, is carried on wooden binders resting in shoes cast on the bases of the columns, and the flooring is in both cases of wood.

In the outside wall or shell the columns are replaced by cast-iron standards of **H** section; these occur at every 7 feet and support the ends of the outer ranges of binders above mentioned, and they are connected at the levels of the eaves, first floor, and ground floor, respectively, by horizontal girders or transoms, also of cast iron, which in the two latter cases are flanged to receive the ends of the floor joists, while to those at the eaves are connected the principals of the roof.

The roofs are segmental in section, the versed sine or rise of the segment being 10 feet, the curved principal rafters are of **T** iron, trussed with wrought-iron tie rods and cast-iron struts, and occur at 7 feet intervals.

A skylight 12 feet wide runs along the centre, the entire length of each roof; this is all of iron, and is raised 2 feet above the roof to give space for louvre openings beneath its eaves. The covering of the building both of roof and walls is of corrugated iron, that of the walls is lined with matched boarding slid in between the inside flanges of the wall standards. This roof covering is the only part of the building which shows any symptoms of deterioration; the whole of the internal structure being as likely to last as when first erected.

It is obvious from the principle of construction that the building is capable of being subdivided transversely into as many portions as may be desired, each portion being in length a multiple of 14 feet, but that it cannot be divided longitudinally without necessitating considerable reconstruction and consequent expense.

If divided into three parts they would measure respectively—

- No. 1, 126 ft. \times 98 ft.
- No. 2, 126 ft. \times 84 ft.
- No. 3, 126 ft. \times 84 ft.

If four divisions were required, their dimensions would be—

- No. 1, 126 ft. \times 70 ft.
- No. 2, 126 ft. \times 70 ft.
- No. 3, 126 ft. \times 56 ft.
- No. 4, 126 ft. \times 70 ft.

A subdivision into five would give—

- No. 1, 126 ft. \times 56 ft.
- No. 2, 126 ft. \times 56 ft.
- No. 3, 126 ft. \times 56 ft.
- No. 4, 126 ft. \times 42 ft.
- No. 5, 126 ft. \times 56 ft.

To each of these portions there would have to be added at least one, and in some cases two, end walls, which would probably be constructed in brickwork, and in conjunction with this work, and in the same material, there might be added such supplementary premises as might be deemed necessary or advisable adjuncts to the Local Museums; such, for instance, as vestibules, library, offices, and rooms for porters, for waiting, and for refreshments. By taking advantage of this construction a front of a more or less pleasing or architectural character could be given to the building.

In cases where the limited nature of the funds would not permit of any such additions, it is suggested that they should, nevertheless, be considered in placing the iron building on the proposed site, so that any future additions might be made in front, and so keep this useful, but in external appearance somewhat homely, structure in the background.

(Signed) F. FOWKE, Capt. R.E.

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